

# **Watson Park Community Meeting on Status of Park Soil Sampling**

Wednesday, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2005

Watson Community Center

## **Meeting Notes**

*In attendance:* Demetria Adams (CSJ), Linda M. Abundiz, Aurelia Bailey, Mark Bailey, Albert Bálagso (CSJ), Ed Bautista (CSJ), Rose Bedard, Debbie Bybee (CSJ), Gloria Cerul, Brian Clampitt (CSJ), Vice Mayor Cindy Chavez (Council District 3), John Cimino (SJUSD), Francesca Dro, Karen Fuqua (SJUSD), Eric Godshalk, Don Gagliardi, Kip Harkness (CSJ), Alvina Lane, Albertina Loya, Gary Lynch (CSJ), Francesco Macri, Simeon Mercado (CSJ), Charles Metzinger (Shaw Consulting), Katheryn Nicol, Cathy Novello, Jonathan Noble (Council District 3), Tanya Novello, Pat D. Olgostino, Suzanne Oliver (Council District 3), Paul Pereira (CSJ), Jose Posadas, Terry Roberts (CSJ), Nat Robinson, Joe A. Rose, Neil Rufino, Dru Scott, Sonja Shurr (SJUSD), Ana Tudino, Melissa Usack, Ty Williams (SJUSD)

### **Introductions**

Vice Mayor Cindy Chavez thanked everyone for attending the meeting and began the evening with an overview of the events that led to the community meeting. Albert Balagso, Assistant Director of Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services, and Dr. Gary Lynch, Environmental Program Manager for the Environmental Services Department, provided an overview of the soil sampling and studies undertaken at Watson Park. Background information was distributed, as well as a Questions and Answers sheet relative to the park and community gardens. Additional questions were asked and responded to during the meeting. The following is a summary of those questions and the answers provided.

### **Questions and Answers, summarized:**

*What does the next step entail?*

The next step in the process may involve solutions including remediation, monitoring, signage, etc.

*Will the tests be done in the entire park?*

Yes, over time. The next immediate step calls for specific testing in areas of high use and high contact with the soil and will be completed on a faster pace than the rest of the testing throughout the remainder of the park.

*What are the sites immediately impacted?*

The play lot area, the garden areas, tree bank, and the dog park will be examined immediately to rule out if there is something we missed.

*On the map provided, which areas / numbers have the elevated levels of lead and arsenic?*

SS11, the soccer field area near 22<sup>nd</sup>/ Jackson, and SS7, near the community garden.

*Was there any testing done at Empire Gardens Elementary School?*

Earlier testing by the school district has been done, with results showing compound levels consistent with naturally occurring background levels.

*Of the sites that tested above naturally occurring levels of lead and arsenic, what has been done?*

The sites have been contained and are being further studied. The soccer field is currently fenced off, and the soil in the skatepark construction site was replaced with clean soil and gravel.

*What about the community gardens?*

The community gardens will close after June 5<sup>th</sup>. The latter closure date will allow people extra time to remove any personal items prior to the closure. If, after several weeks and additional testing, the gardens are deemed safe, they will be reopened for the fall growing season.

*Is the dog park closed?*

The dog park will currently remain open. If further testing warrants, it will closed until the next steps are determined.

*People have played soccer here for the last 30 years. Why close the soccer field now?*

Everyone has a different opinion about the risk involved. The health assessment completed by the consultants shows a very small risk of developing anything (about 1: 1 Million people), which is consistent with naturally occurring areas in the community. Because the soccer field tested high in one area though, we are being extra cautious. The City still has work to do; there are some areas that warrant additional review, but we are not closing the entire park.

*Why didn't you close the other soccer field?*

Testing at that soccer field did not indicate a problem with the soil.

*Are soccer players being relocated?*

Soccer leagues that have scheduled time for the soccer field are being rescheduled time at other fields throughout the City of San Jose.

*Will the Community Center be closed?*

No. The community center is currently scheduled to remain open.

*Are we starting Phase 2?*

Yes. We are bringing on board a consultant to develop a study plan and schedule. The fact that it might be a landfill means that there is a higher potential for problems.

*Will there be a follow up meeting?*

We will come back to the community to discuss next steps and plans for the park site. Additional samples are being scheduled for testing from the play lot area, the dog park, the community gardens, and the tree back area. A community meeting will be scheduled before school resumes to discuss the next set of findings. Future discussions on the skatepark and other elements of the park will occur after all testing is complete. The City does not want to proceed with discussions on the relocation of the skatepark until further testing results are returned.

*When will the next meeting be held?*

The next meeting will likely be held in August.

*What orchard is being discussed?*

The orchard being discussed is located adjacent to the park, on the northernmost boundary and next to Taylor Street. There are currently no plans to purchase the park, but the idea came from some community members.

*Who is paying for the costs associated with the testing and remediation?*

At this time, the City is charging the testing to the skatepark budget as the funds are immediately available and the testing needs to be done as a priority. At the same time, the City is looking for other sources of funding to complete testing and replace funding for the skatepark. A grant is being pursued to help pay for the testing and skatepark completion. At one point, funding for the completion of a skatepark at Roosevelt was available but was pulled when budgets dwindled. The discussion of a skatepark at Roosevelt may be back on the table and fast-tracked as a result of this.

*How does this site and results compare in size and potential problems with other sites (as an example, shoreline)?*

The other sites have been larger. This site is associated with unofficial dump and burn sites from years past. It is estimated that unofficial dumping and burning occurred here between 75 and 100 years ago.

*The whole area used to be known as a dump site. What about the homes? Does the lead and arsenic extend outward to the properties?*

The extent of the area is not known. That's why additional testing is being done. If property owners maintain a ground cover of lawn or other vegetative growth, refuse may not be penetrating the surface if the area extends into the neighborhood.

*How can a private property owner get their soil tested?*

If the surface soil looks like it has materials in it that are visible, such as broken glass and what appears to be old household refuse, concerned homeowners can have their soil privately tested at a local lab. Testing for arsenic and lead in the soil is usually less than \$50. A nearby lab such as Sequoia Analytical Lab in Morgan Hill would be able to test soil for private property owners. Sequoia Analytical Lab is located at 885 Jarvis Ave in Morgan Hill and can be contacted by phone at 408.776.9600.

*How will the report be distributed?*

By email to everyone who has signed in with an email address. Hard copies of the report will also be made available at future Strong Neighborhoods meetings and at the Watson Community Center.

*Is there a website where we can get the information?*

The information will be posted on a website in the next few days. Everyone who left an email will be sent a link to the information as well as follow up information as it become available.

*Who can we contact with follow up questions?*

Two phone numbers are listed on the Question and Answers sheet provided: PRNS can be reached at 277-2466 or the Office of Vice Mayor Chavez at 408.277.5231. Questions regarding community garden plots can be directed to Manny Perez or Joe Garvin at 277.5208.

*How will we be informed of updates to the testing and process?*

Regular updates will be made available through the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC) meetings held at 6:30 PM on the third Thursday of each month at the Watson Community Center.